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AUTHOR O'Connor, Bob
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ABSTRACT

In this lesson plan, students role play members of the Cabinet of the President of the United States. Cabinet members must define and defend their highest priority programs for the coming fiscal year. Students must identify a pressing current issue before their particular Cabinet department and prepare an action plan, with possible alternative courses, that can meet budget constraints. Students are provided with background information, detailed instructions, online resources, and reflection questions. The teacher's notes describe the unit's purpose and suggest teaching strategies. (BT)

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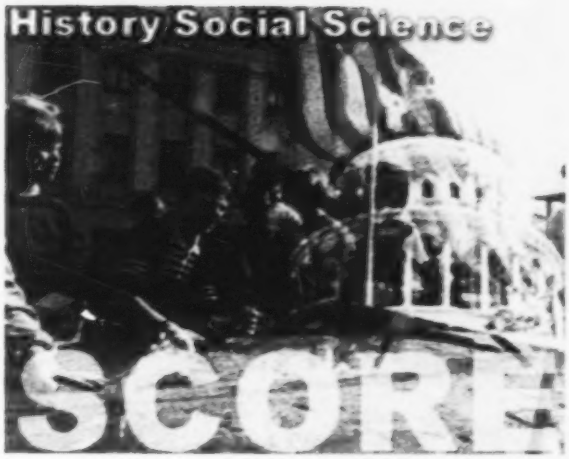

Schools of California Online Resources for Education (SCORE): Connecting California's Classrooms to the World

Advising the President: A Simulated Cabinet Meeting

12th Grade Lesson by Bob O'Connor

SCORE
San Berardino County Superintendent of Schools
601 North E. Street
San Bernardino, CA 92410-3093

http://score.rims.k12.ca.us/activity/cabinet/index.html

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Office of the President of the United States

1600 Pennsylvania Avenue

Washington, D.C. 20500

202-456-1414

Dear Cabinet Members:

Please be informed that at the next cabinet meeting you will be asked to prepare a report on your highest priority program.The purpose of this meeting is to inform me of the program that ranks the highest priority for the coming fiscal year. As you are well aware in this time of fiscal constraint, we in government must set our priorities on all programs under our administration. Please be prepared to give me details on why your highest ranking program needs to maintain or increase its current budget. Prepare all necessary documentation for your presentation with any supporting graphics and testimonials that you believe necessary to make your case for continued support for this program. You will have five minutes at the this cabinet meeting to present your case. Be prepared to defend your position with any questions that I may have for you.

I look forward to seeing you and I await your recommendations on how the federal government is continued its most critical programs in these times of economic restraint. If we all work for the best interest of this country, we will achieve the goals of the Preamble to the Constitution.

Sincerely yours,

The President of the United States

ADVISING THE PRESIDENT:
A SIMULATED CABINET MEETING

YOUR TASK

Washington, D.C. is and extremely competitive, political town and you must work hard to keep your agency an important part of government. It's the beginning of the legislative calendar and you must compete with other agencies and departments for a part of the budget and a high profile emphasis from the president. It is through his ³bully pulpit² that you will garner support for the needs and programs of your department with Congress during the next year. It's up to you, as agency chief, to identify a

pressing current issue before your department/post and prepare an option paper or presentation for the president. Explore possible courses of action to remedy this problem and the potential cost to accomplish the goals set forth in each course of action you are proposing to solve this pressing social problem. You may prepare charts, tables and graphs to explain your plans to the President.

The following list of players and roles in this simulation are:

- the President (your teacher) who will listen to each report and consult with you in making his final decision on each proposal based on the soundness of the proposals and the presenters' ability to defend the positions it is arguing.
- the Cabinet members who will advise the President on their number one problem/concern.

PROCESS

You are a member to the President's Cabinet made up of the heads of the fourteen executive departments and the Ambassador to the United Nations. Your task is to advise the President on one ³current² pressing problem or concern facing your department or post. You may meet informally with the other members of the Cabinet to brainstorm possible important issues for each one of the Cabinet posts. After you have reached some degree of consensus on the issue each of you will bring before the President, you can proceed to develop a presentation. Your advice to the the President will take the form of an Action Plan with possible alternative courses of action to meet the budget constraints. The political situation in this simulation has the President of one party,A the Congress of another party and the public opinion polls showing an overwhelming majority of the people favoring the government maintaining a balanced budget with no new taxes.

LEARNING ADVICE

You must come prepared to advance your department/post's most pressing problem or concern in light of the budget constraints in today's political climate. The more information that you can gather on the problem or concern will advance your cause with the President and his executive team. (See the president's message accompanying this lesson.)

To do a good job of achieving a favorable response from the President and his executive team, it will be important to investigate the current problems and concerns facing your department/post and select one that may have the President's interest at heart. Research the department/post using newspapers, news magazines and the Internet related to the stories that you uncover concerning problems and concerns. As a part of the government bureaucracy, you are always lobbying for more funds to accomplish the mission of your post. However, today's political climate is calling for smaller government that accomplishes more with less. It may be necessary to cut back your proposed action plans if the President and his team think that they are too expensive and/or too bureaucratic for today's political climate.

EVALUATION

Your grade will be dependent upon your careful preparation of your proposal and action plans in the cabinet meeting. Be prepared to demonstrate that you have the answers to the President's questions on your department/post problem or concern. Your data should validate your presentation's suggestions.

CONCLUSION

After all the cabinet members have made their reports and the President with the advice of his/her executive team has made the final decision, the class will critique the presentations as to which ones were most persuasive. The class will also judge the realistic aspects of the meeting and the proposals, which were made in this mock cabinet meeting.

REFLECTION

Look aback over the process just completed. Are there any changes that you would make in how each player handled the responsibilities of his/her role? The following are some things that might be considered by each person.

1. How do simulations help students to retain more knowledge and understanding of the workings of government?
2. How did the Internet help you research your role?
3. If you were to do this type of lesson again, what advice would you have for yourself or other students?

RESOURCES

The President's Cabinet Departments can be individually accessed via the Internet through the following homepages:

The President's Cabinet:	http://www.whitehouse.gov/WH/Cabinet.html/cabinet_links.html
Department of Agriculture:	http://www.usda.gov/
Department of Commerce:	http://www.doc.gov/
Department of Defense:	http://www.defenselink.mil/
Department of Education:	http://www.ed.gov/
Department of Energy:	http://www.doe.gov/
Department of Health and Human Services:	http://www.os.dhhs.gov/
Department of Housing and Urban Development:	http://www.hud.gov/
Department of the Interior:	http://www.doi.gov/
Department of Justice:	http://www.dol.gov/
Department of State:	http://www.state.gov/
Department of Transportation:	http://www.dot.gov/
Department of the Treasury:	http://www.ustreas.gov/
Department of Veterans Affairs:	http://www.va.gov/

The White House and related executive Internet sites are as follows:

Welcome to the White House:	http://www.whitehouse.gov/
White House Press Releases:	http://sunsite.unc.edu/white-house/white-house.html
The White House: President, First Lady, Vice President, Second Lady	http://www.whitehouse.gov/WH/EOP/html/couples.html
The United Nations can be reached at:	http://www.un.org

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Current news stories on events dealing with the executive branch can be reached through your Internet server search vehicles and news services.

Examples of Other Resources

Daily newspapers and news magazines

Library news services like Newsbank, which collect news stories from hundreds of news papers across the nation have search tools to find stories on related subjects from across the nation's newspapers.

Daily news casts on commercial television, cable networks, C-Span and public radio/television news/public affairs programs are also important sources of information.

TEACHER NOTES:

Grade 12: Principles of American Democracy

Unit: Our Government Today: Legislative and Executive Branches

Lesson Purpose/Objective:

The purpose/objective of this executive branch lesson is to reinforce the following Framework Skills: Characteristic 11 by [3]developing civic and democratic values[2]; Characteristic 13 by introducing the students to [3]controversial issues honestly and accurately[2]; and Characteristic 16 by [3]engaging students activity in the learning process[2].

Lesson Length/Customizing:

This simulation works well as the culminating activity of lessons on the executive branch. The preparation time couid be included as part of the overall assignment for the executive branch. It could involve class, library and home assignment components. Class time will be needed for the organizational parts of setting up a cabinet meeting. Current issues may be taken from the cabinet's homepage or recent stories in the media.

The cabinet meeting phase of the lesson would take a minimum of two days to conduct. The critique and debriefing of the outcomes will conclude the simulation with an optional essay to follow.

Additional roles may be added to increase the number of students involved in the simulation i.e. under secretaries, vice president, white house advisors. The format can also be changed to a press conference simulation, where the class and teacher assume the role of the press and the cabinet members take questions on their proposed programs etc.

Materials:

The textbook, a computer with an Internet connection, and other resources on the executive departments from supplementary print and audio-visual sources are essential resources. Teacher prepared instruction and sign up sheets are also needed.

Possible Adaptations for Special Needs Students:

The teacher can script and simplify the simulation to accommodate the needs of resource and English Learners.

Author:
Bob O'Connor
Gahr High School
ABC U.S.D.